

THE SOUL OF FABIAN

BY GERALD VILLIERS-STUART.

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CHAPTER XXX—Continued.

The great vaulted room was dimly lighted by two bracket lamps at either end, and in that light they could see von Tarsenheim's face, greenish white, against his long, black, pointed beard, which was horribly shadowed over by his jolting tongue; but even yet the ghost of the mocking smile hung about it.

The two young men looked at one another, mutely asking which would venture up to the horrible relief of humanity which had defied the gods.

"He is dead!" whispered Fabian Dare.

"Yes," answered Vandrakens. "Thank the Lord! He is dead!"

"That's well enough for you—but now he cannot free me from your cursed personality. I must go on to the end of my days bearing the burden of your beastly life, or—No! by God! to the end of your days! Yes, that is it—the end of your days!" He drew nearer Vandrakens.

"What do you mean? Who are you? Keep away from me! It is bad enough to be in the same room with a face like yours, but don't touch me! I shall kill you if you touch me!"

The nerves of the two men were in a fearful state. They had temporarily crossed the borderland of sanity.

"A face like mine!" Fabian laughed maliciously as he crept nearer. "A face like mine! Why, you fool, it's your own face—the reflection of your own defaced soul! I am the man you bought with your money to transfer your infernal life to!"

He had come close up to Vandrakens now, who had half fallen back against a table, and was clutching it for support, and thrust his face into his. "Look at it," he whispered. "Look at it close! It's yours!"

And so it came to pass that Vandrakens, while still alive, met his own soul face to face, as he would some day have to meet it on his star, unless he had dragged it down to the earth.

"Take it away!" moaned Vandrakens, at last. "You are a distorted mirror. How can I be mine? I wasn't as bad as all that, and I have given up that life—I have repented! Only take that face away!"

Fabian laughed again. "Why, man, it is your face for all eternity! How can I take it away?"

"You lie!" snarled Vandrakens. "I will destroy the hideous thing!" And he made a frenzied snatch at the throat of Fabian Dare. "I will stamp it out of existence!"

"You can't stamp your soul out of existence," whispered the other, in a strangled voice, as he fought to reach Vandrakens' throat.

The two men were evenly matched, and after a brief struggle threw each other off, and stood, panting and glaring into one another's staring eyes. As they faced one another their frenzy began to calm down to a fixed purpose. The same idea was in the mind of each—they could not both live. The operation could now only be undone by the use of one of them, at least so they thought; and they both loved the same woman.

Vandrakens felt that if that face, which, of course, he did not see as others saw, but as in a distorted mirror, dare not be exterminated, life would be possible again, and he might even dare to face eternity.

Fabian Dare felt the hatred of the slave for the man who had betrayed him, and he believed, from what Fabian Dare told him, that Vandrakens' death would free him of his detested personality.

Neither of them knew, in their demented state, that von Tarsenheim's death had really liberated their entangled souls, and that the effects of the hypnotic operation were passing away with the death of the hypnotist.

And so they stood facing one another. Vandrakens was the first to speak.

"We cannot both live," he said; "and yet, if either of us kills the other—"

"That is only a superstition."

"But suppose it should be true?" said Vandrakens.

"Yes, suppose it should be true?" echoed the other. "Yet nothing but your death, Vandrakens, can get me back my soul!"

"Which you will not do!" he said. "I don't stand by my bargain! Human gold cannot buy a soul!"

"I cannot live in the same world with your face!" moaned Vandrakens. "Sooner or later I shall destroy it! There is only one way out of it—of us must commit suicide!"

"Yes, that is it!" panted Fabian, snatching at the idea. "We will leave it to fate. One of us must die, but neither must kill the other. No—I dare not kill you! Superstition or no, I dare not kill you! I dare not kill you, and you shall not kill me! We will toss up who commits suicide!"

Fabian's eyes wandered to the little red tablets scattered on the floor. He stooped and picked one up and threw it into the air, and the other stood between him and Vandrakens. The phial containing the white tablets was already on the table. He took one out. It was exactly the same shape and size as the red one. He hesitated, and then he threw it into the air, and it fell into his hand, which he held up to his eye.

"We will fight a duel," he said to Vandrakens, "such a duel as has never been fought before. Let the devil choose his own!"

"What do you propose?"

"We each turn out a lamp—at the same moment, you understand? Then we come back to this table, in the dark. We each pick up a tablet, we each swallow the tablet we pick up—our words of honor on that. Do you accept the terms?"

"It's a good idea," assented Vandrakens. "I give you my word of honor, and accept yours."

"You have my word, Vandrakens."

"Very well, then. There is nothing to wait for."

The lamps hung on the rough-hewn walls, at either end of the room. The two young men approached them through the shadows cast by the vaulted ceiling, and watched each other as they stood with hands raised, ready to turn them out.

"Are you ready?" called Vandrakens.

"Yes!" came the answer.

"Then out with them!"

The duellists could hear each other breathing as they felt their way through the darkness toward the table, each shivering the same terror of touching the awful thing in the machine as they groped about the room.

"I am at the table," announced Fabian, at last.

"Have you swallowed your tablet?" asked Vandrakens, hoarsely.

"No. We will do that at the same time. Can't you find the tablet?"

"Yes," answered Vandrakens, as his outstretched hand touched it. Then the fingers of the two men met as they fumbled and groped on the table. The little tablets rattled faintly as they picked them up and dropped them again.

"Well!" panted Fabian. "Why don't you swallow what you have in your hand, and make an end of it? Are you a coward? I think I have the white one under my finger. It feels white—it looks white through the darkness. I wonder if you know what you have done to me with your money? No! no! you don't—you have no conscience!"

But the death of von Tarsenheim having released Vandrakens' soul, his conscience was able to prompt him once more, and his mind was recovering its balance. Perhaps it was the thought of how deeply he had wronged the other man, or the belief

that by one great act of magnanimity he might make atonement for his life, which made him strike a match.

"Cheese," cried he, as he saw that it was the red tablet which he held in his fingers, and before his shaking hand could get it to his mouth, Vandrakens had snatched it from him and put it in his own mouth. Then the match went out!

The unexpected act of self-sacrifice bred a feeling of revulsion in Fabian Dare, whose mind also swung back to a calmer pole.

"Don't swallow it!" he cried. "For God's sake! don't swallow it! We will get through our lives as best we can! I think we have both been mad!"

"It has been mad!" answered Vandrakens, faintly, through the darkness. "It was the only square thing to do. If I could live my life over again, I would live it differently—too, much money—not altogether my fault!"

Fabian Dare struck a match himself as he heard the fall of Vandrakens' body. Then he heard footsteps coming down the stairs, and he saw the light of a candle being carried in his hand, and came forward.

"He is dead—he took poison!" whispered Fabian Dare.

Lord Ancaster shuddered as he covered the face with a handkerchief.

"It was a noble action! He repented," ended Fabian Dare, as he hastily recounted Vandrakens' sacrifice. "Yes, he repented at the last. If there is a personal God, his sins are forgiven him."

"If not?" said Lord Ancaster, and the two men looked at each other questioningly.

THE END.

EPILOGUE.

The storm was over. Another battle in the everlasting conflict between flesh and spirit had been fought out. Then an anger of peace swept over the battlefield, laying hands of healing on the living victims of the fight, and burying the fallen so deep that no noxious fumes of corruption could arise to haunt the survivors.

Abdul von Tarsenheim, one of those strange products of the rebel planet, Saturn, had stolen weapons from the armory of the universe which human hands have not yet used, and he had used them with safety. He had tried into chambers the doors of which will be open to us all when our eyes have grown strong enough to bear the light, our ears capable of hearing the harmonies without being deafened forever; and so another of Lot's wives had turned into a pillar of salt.

Whether his machine was only an electrical device, or whether he really had invented a method of utilizing planetary electricity, and recording the harmonies and discords produced by the revolution of the planets, or whether the gypsy sheik—himself an advanced hypnotist—had caused his victim to believe that he heard the discords which killed him, will never be known. Still, it is a curious fact that experts in the use of hypnotism and of the use of the electric current, at least so they thought; and they both loved the same woman.

Vandrakens felt that if that face, which, of course, he did not see as others saw, but as in a distorted mirror, dare not be exterminated, life would be possible again, and he might even dare to face eternity.

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"Yes, that is it!" panted Fabian, snatching at the idea. "We will leave it to fate. One of us must die, but neither must kill the other. No—I dare not kill you! Superstition or no, I dare not kill you! I dare not kill you, and you shall not kill me! We will toss up who commits suicide!"

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ful philosophy any more for her most restless moods, in his poetical fervor a stimulant for her duller moments.

But how the strange boy she had known at Oxford had matured so swiftly into an interesting personality remained one of the mysteries which sent that puzzled look into her wondering eyes.

And Vandrakens—poor Vandrakens—who was only the victim of distorted economic forces, the by-product of laws made in the days when men could not, by any possible chance, have anticipated such conditions of life as exist to-day, did not live in vain.

He had made his material wealth the common denominator of his life, and tried to square his world, as he found it, with that figure, truth, that blameless truth. With his material environment and upbringing, he could hardly have done otherwise. His life may have been a hand held up in warning to the generations which followed behind him. He seems to have realized this possibility, for the day which followed the bursting of the storm of consequence, and preceded his death, had been spent in drawing up a will.

He left the bulk of his wealth to trustees, among whom were Lord Ancaster and Dashmore, who were to employ it as the nucleus of a fund for obtaining legislation by amendments to the Constitution of the United States, which should make it impossible in the future for any man to give in his lifetime, or bequeath by will, more than \$2,000,000.

In order to obtain this legislation he pointed out that money must be used sparingly to outbid the men who were interested in concentrating wealth in the hands of a few, and that the legal talent of the country. These men, he realized, had not used their knowledge of the laws of their country to defeat its own purposes, and that they had their country, but because they loved money.

Through his contact with von Tarsenheim, who knew human nature as only the Saturn type can know it, and saw it in perspective, and like that strange being, having, for a time, no conscience, his brain looked at an undistorted humanity in the cold, clear light of materialism.

He recognized the futility of overlooking the obvious, that there is a personal God, his sins are forgiven him.

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S. KANN & SONS & CO.

8th St. & Pa. Ave.

THE BUSY CORNER

We shall place on sale to-day

1,000 wash skirts
At \$1.19

Made in the popular flare and pleated modes.

These skirts are worth at least double the sale price, and as they were purchased at a special forced sale, there is no telling when such a bargain may be had again.

First Floor—Bargain Tables.

A FASHION CENSOR

London sports a censor of plays, and Paris bids fair to require a censor of fashions, with lovely woman at the races reviving Directoire styles to such an extent that it was necessary to appeal to the police.

The London man reads plays in order to ascertain if a maiden may ask her mother to take her with propriety to see a play. And it is just possible we shall yet see a fashion censor running about with a tape measure in his hand and fire in his eye. No haggling over ruse situations for him. Rather will he see a dame with a too, too clinging skirt, and charge after her, crying "Halt!" He will run the measure round the offending drapery, and dramatically exclaim: "Halt! As I thought! Thirteen inches below requirements. You are arrested, madam."

Or he might round up "extinguishers" hats, especially those which he considered a menace to public safety. Too transparent lingerie dresses would trouble him endlessly, while overaudacious hose might be his undoing. Say he'd only gotten a glimpse; imagine the stony glare he'd receive when he requested confirmatory evidence. He'd also have his troubles when fringed courtiers hunted him out to know why he had suppressed their most cherished creations.

BONDAGE TO WHITE WAIST

Each year the cry goes up that the separate white waist is doomed, but the year sees it early blossoming. The truth of the matter is that it has too many overpowering good points for the average woman to give it up. Coolness, freshness, adaptability, comfort—they all speak in its favor. Long ago the ordinary, everyday feminine rebelled against a continued wearing in stifling boned waists. Then evolved the shirt waist. To-day white waists, with colored skirts, are not worn on the street by well-dressed women. To meet this difficulty we have the jumper dress, which, for much the same reasons as apply to the shirt waist, retains its hold on popularity. For wear under tailors' coats suits nothing but a separate white waist is practicable. Let fashionable modistes frown on them as they will, there is no doubt that white waists will be with us for some time to come.

PEPTONIZING MILK.

Strong milk, pancreatic acid extract, and bicarbonate of soda are all that is necessary in the preparation.

For a pint of milk fifteen grains of bicarbonate of soda and five of pancreatic acid are required.

Like any other milk, mix in half a cupful of milk, and this is added to the pint, stirring and blending.

The work is best done in a covered preserve jar, which is placed in a kettle at 115 Fahrenheit.

The kettle should be tightly covered to keep it at the same temperature, and it should stand two hours.

Should it be modified, all the ingredients except the bicarbonate of soda should be added.

Standing in heat for two hours completely peptonizes milk, and if only a partial process is wished, fifteen or twenty minutes suffices.

Peptonized milk is only given to a baby after some digestive disturbance, and should never be given without a doctor's orders.

THE NEW EVENING GOWN.

Softest fabrics compose it. Even the ribbons used on it must be of the same material.

Stoles, long panels, and scarfs are the most prominent characteristics. Silver and gold threads are also enlisted with great success.

Crystal, turquoise, and other beads add in the effectiveness of long stoles.

On the head and beads are massed upon a fillet foundation.

The dress is frequently a composite of Directoire, Empire, and Egyptian styles. The classic lines prohibit much jewelry and neck trinkets are tabooed with them.

They also require a simple hairdressing and the most unaggressive coiffure ornaments.

KNICKERS.

They have their uses. Paris builds them of chiffon. For day wear they are heavier.

They may be of China silk, satin, or mohair.

For mountain climbing or for traveling they are comfortable.

For sporting wear they have long been the only sane wear.

With them there is no acquiring mud spots. Better yet, the heels cannot catch in them.

REFLECTIONS OF A BACHELOR GIRL

By HELEN ROWLAND.

The only mills that haven't been shut down during the slump appear to be the mills—and they grind merrierly on. As long as Satan can make a woman believe that it is possible to reform a rake and make a rogue over into a doting husband the ladies will keep his majesty's business running.

Many a man who is willing to exchange her curves for a little muscle it would be that maddening, "There, there, now" attitude which the average man greets her righteous wrath.

Many a man would be dumfounded if he should discover that the ideal in his wife's heart didn't have a double chin, a bald spot, and turned-in toes just like himself.